

## CHAPTER II.

## SERVICES IN VAN DIEMEN'S LAND.

ARRIVAL IN VAN DIEMEN'S LAND.—SUCCESSIVE APPOINTMENTS THERE.—SIR GEORGE ARTHUR RELINQUISHES THE GOVERNMENT.—HIS SUCCESSOR.—CORDIAL CO-OPERATION BETWEEN SIR JOHN FRANKLIN AND MR. MONTAGU.—MR. MONTAGU VISITS ENGLAND IN 1839.—HIS RETURN TO VAN DIEMEN'S LAND, AND PUBLIC LABORS THERE.—MISUNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR AND THE COLONIAL SECRETARY.—SUSPENSION OF MR. MONTAGU FROM THE OFFICE OF COLONIAL SECRETARY.—TAKES MEASURES FOR RETURNING TO ENGLAND.—TESTIMONIALS ON LEAVING VAN DIEMEN'S LAND.—ARRIVES IN ENGLAND.—ADDRESSES HIMSELF TO LORD STANLEY, SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE COLONIES.

IN 1823, Colonel Arthur was appointed Lieutenant-Governor in Van Diemen's Land, and Captain Montagu (then of the 40th regiment) who accompanied him, was, on arrival there in 1824, nominated, as has been already noticed, Private Secretary, under which designation he discharged the threefold duties of Public, Military, and Private Secretary.

IN 1826, Van Diemen's Land, which had until that period been a dependency of New South Wales, was constituted a separate Colony, and Captain Montagu became Clerk of the Executive and Legislative Councils, which formed a part of the extended system of Government. In that office he continued

until 1829, when he was called upon by military duty to proceed to England; and thereupon the Lieutenant-Governor issued, unsolicited, the following notification:—

“On the occasion of Captain Montagu’s departure, his Excellency cannot avoid expressing that his zeal, intelligence, and discretion in conducting the business of the Council since its first appointment have merited the unqualified approbation of the Lieutenant-Governor and insured him the entire confidence of the Council.”

In 1830, Sir George Murray, Secretary of State for the Colonies, offered to reappoint Captain Montagu to the Clerkship of the Councils, on the condition of his quitting the army; this condition he promptly acceded to, and then returned to Van Diemen’s Land for the purpose of devoting himself, as throughout the remainder of his life he did, to offices of civil administration, for which his steady application, method, and aptitude for business admirably fitted him.

In 1832, he was directed to take charge, temporarily, of the Colonial Treasury. This he held for a year, and, on being relieved from it, received most flattering testimonials of the efficient manner in which he had conducted its affairs, and discharged the trust reposed in him.

In 1834, the Colonial Secretaryship became vacant by the retirement of the gentleman who had filled it from its creation in 1826, and Mr. Montagu was placed therein until the pleasure of the Secretary of State should be known. To that office he was, in the same year, permanently appointed by the Earl of Aberdeen, and, as stated by his Lordship, “on public grounds only.”



In October, 1836, Sir George Arthur relinquished the Government of Van Diemen's Land to Sir John Franklin, and in doing so recorded the following opinion of Mr. Montagu, in his confidential report to his successor :—

“From the Colonial Secretary you will derive all that assistance which can be expected from an experience in Colonial matters of thirteen years' duration, from thorough habits of business, and from assiduous application to office duties, combined with an integrity of character that can be entirely relied upon.”

In the successive offices above enumerated,—offices discharged with so much zeal, intelligence and versatility of talent on his own part, and acknowledged with so much approbation and confidence on the part of those under whom he served,—Mr. Montagu was schooling and disciplining himself, and acquiring that vast information, energy of character, and grasp and capability in the discharge of official duties, for which he became afterwards so eminent ; and which in future years enabled him to project and conduct those great and varied public works, in the Cape Colony, with which his name will ever be honorably associated. With him thirteen years' public service was not the mere routine of the same daily recurring discharge of measured duties staked out, and marked off, to be executed as his official task : there was ever about him that constant and elastic vigor which did not suffer him to do anything simply as a task ;—he threw life and a desire for progress, and the reaching after improvement into all that he did : whatever his duty was, he executed it promptly and energetically, simply because his heart was in it, and because he looked upon it as duty,



not as work. The principle which seemed to actuate him was this: "whatever is worth doing" (and assuredly whatever is our duty is so) "is worth doing well," and in this spirit he acted; and the result was, that in all his public acts, there were discernible such understanding, comprehension, and vigor that an intelligent observer could at once mark there had been an earnest and active mind at work there.

For the first four years of Sir J. Franklin's government in Van Diemen's Land, there appears to have existed the most cordial co-operation and strict confidence between his Excellency and the Colonial Secretary; and during these years Mr. Montagu applied his energies to those considerations, and to that deep knowledge and improvement in Convict Discipline, which afterwards attached such merit to his name and value to his services. In 1838, Sir John's testimony was to this effect:—"It is only due to the Colonial Secretary that I should record the zeal, ability and singleness of purpose with which he devotes himself to promote the interests of my government, and to carry into effect, as soon as they are made known to him, my measures for the advancement of the institutions of this Colony, and for the improvement of Convict Discipline. I feel very much indebted to Mr. Montagu for his unwearying co-operation, and for the very important assistance which I have received from him in the discharge of his duties, ever since I assumed the administration of the Colony."

In February, 1839, Mr. Montagu again visited England, and on his obtaining leave of absence, received not only from his Excellency a government notice recording "the unwearied zeal for the public good which had distinguished the performance of his



duties" in Van Diemen's Land;—but also a very complimentary address from the Colonists expressing their anxious desire for his speedy return to the office of Colonial Secretary, which they stated "he had so long conducted with advantage to the Colony and honor to himself." On his return to Van Diemen's Land, in March, 1841, Mr. Montagu received the most marked expression of general approbation, and confidence in his public and private character, which could be paid to any government functionary. A public dinner, with the largest company that had ever, up to that time, been assembled in Van Diemen's Land, on a like occasion, was given in compliment to him, by the most intelligent and influential of the Colonists, collected from every quarter of the island, and who represented every shade of political opinion. Sir John Franklin was present, and openly expressed the pleasure it gave him to witness the honor conferred on the Colonial Secretary on his return, and testified to the efficient and zealous manner in which he had invariably discharged the duties of his office.

The energies of Mr. Montagu were at this time especially turned to establishing the Probation System of convict discipline, in room of the Assignment System, which had been abolished by the Home Government. This new system was a national experiment upon a large and expensive scale, and it therefore became a matter of vast importance to administer it effectively. It was exactly the undertaking to give full scope to Mr. Montagu's talents, as well as to afford opportunity for the exercise of his great activity. With most painstaking assiduity he prepared all the instructions necessary for its operation, and furnished full and detailed orders to the several



departments for its execution : and besides this, at Sir John Franklin's request, visited the several stations chosen for the parties, in order to see that his instructions were properly understood, and duly carried out. Thus matters proceeded smoothly, and there existed both publicly and privately the most perfect cordiality between Sir John Franklin and his subordinate, the Colonial Secretary, when in Oct., 1841, arose, unexpectedly, one of those casual misunderstandings which, gathering to themselves importance from undesigned trifles and untoward coincidences, at length grow to such magnitude and vehemence that they distract counsels, and divide governments.

It is far from my intention to open afresh a wound which time has well-nigh healed in the feelings of those once closely connected with the circumstances alluded to; and further still is it from my intention to sit in judgment, or cast blame on actions with the merits of which I am but imperfectly acquainted; it is simply my purpose, as a biographer, having documents before me, to record, as faithfully and fairly as I can, whatever may vindicate the character of him whose biography I write. With those opposed to him, in Van Diemen's Land, I am wholly unacquainted. I question not their motives, I censure not the steps they took, I desire not to cast one unjust reflection, to speak one unkind word, to think even one uncharitable thought regarding them. I wish to stand clear of all design, of doing more than to note historically as a fact, an important circumstance in the life of him whose memoir I am relating. The two leading parties in the contention, can now contend in it no more. One of them certainly, the other in all probability, is beyond



the reach of strife; and their liberation from the struggles, and jealousies and fluctuations of this uncertain life, may well teach us how vain and transitory are all our differences when viewed from the dim and remote bourne of life's last scenes and moments. Trackless seas and impassable barriers, if we may conjecture, lie between the *two* now alike at rest. Whatever their once differences, the after career of each was one of public confidence, enterprize, and honor. The name of one will fix a mark of melancholy interest to Arctic scenes, where there is little doubt he has met the resolute adventurer's death; the name of the other is graven on the rocks of Afric's southern climes, where his indefatigable energies opened a passage through the fastnesses of pathless mountains. Both noble, both generous, both forgiving, could they have met in death's solemn hour, on the one grave's brink, after their long separation, and life's strange vicissitudes,—their last grasp would have been one of forgiveness,—their last words of reconciliation. Their lives were for their country, their deaths surrounded with sad and striking associations, and their bones repose far from the scenes in the far Australian world, where they once acted in unison, but parted in variance, to meet in this world no more. They rest! may their differences rest with them! and the bare record of the biographer, without blame and without reproach, simply state that these differences existed, and that from various causes they opened so great a breach between Sir John Franklin and Mr. Montagu, that it resulted in the suspension of the latter from office, and in his sudden return to England. His suspension was notified to him, by the Lieutenant-Governor, on the 25th January, 1842.



By some of Mr. Montagu's warmest advocates, it may probably be deemed unjust to his memory, not to detail in full the charges which were preferred against him : but the recital and re-consideration of them would necessarily involve a discussion now perfectly fruitless, and evoke from their silence and obscurity, matters now buried in oblivion. It is enough for the vindication of Mr. Montagu, and for the honor of his memory to record, that Lord Stanley, then Secretary of State for the Colonies, after going most diligently and painfully through all the documentary evidence, and giving the subject his most unbiassed attention, pronounced his decisive opinion in exculpation of the accused.

Immediately after his suspension, Mr. Montagu took steps for his return to England, with the intention of appealing to the Minister for the Colonies, and for that end embarked in the "Calcutta," Feb. 8, 1842. His unexpected suspension and departure from the Colony were subjects of regret on every hand ; and persons of all ranks and stations, private individuals and public bodies, were eager to testify their sympathy. The following testimonial was set on foot by the Commercial Community of Hobart Town, and circulated through the Colony. It obtained 800 signatures, including those of almost every person of influence, and respectability. This testimonial was also accompanied by the request that Mr. Montagu would be the bearer of a sum of money (2000*l.*) for the purchase of a piece of plate, which substantial gift, as well as the attendance of a deputation, he thought it expedient to decline.

"We whose names are attached to this address have heard, with deep sorrow, that His Excellency the Lieutenant-Governor was yesterday pleased to suspend you in the ex-



cution of your duties as Colonial Secretary. Into the causes which have led to a measure so deeply affecting the public interests, we feel that it would be in us unbecoming to inquire, or if ascertained, to offer thereupon a single observation.

"We are under no such restraint, however, in asserting that the zeal, efficiency, honor, and independence, which you have ever exhibited in the public service cannot be supplied, and in this feeling, learning that you are speedily about to depart from these shores, we request that you will bear with you to England the sum which your delay of a few days here has enabled us to collect, there to be expended in the purchase of a piece of plate, upon which we are desirous of having engraven this motto—'*Magna est vis veritatis.*'

"Signed by nearly 800."

To which Mr. Montagu returned, through the Chairman of the Committee, the subjoined reply:

"Newlands,

"5th February, 1842.

"Sir,—I beg to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of this day's date, in which you are so good as to acquaint me that it is proposed to present me with a testimonial and subscription for the purchase of a piece of plate, previously to my leaving the Colony, and that a deputation of the subscribers would present the same.

"In reply to your kind communication, I do not lose a moment to request that you will convey my warmest thanks and acknowledgments to the gentlemen who have thus taken so kind a mode of expressing their esteem for me.

"I assure you I deeply feel the motives which have given rise to such an expression of kindness, but the position in which I unexpectedly find myself, and the consideration that my case should stand upon its merits, unsupported by any extraneous assistance, preclude me from accepting that which, under other circumstances, would be a lasting source of pride and gratification to me.

"I need scarcely add, that I shall ever feel the strongest



interest in the welfare and prosperity of Van Diemen's Land, to which objects I have already devoted so much of my life.

"I have the honor to remain, Sir,

"Your most obedient servant,

"(Signed) J. MONTAGU.

"To ———, Esq., J.P."

Similar testimony to that furnished by the Commercial Community was also conveyed to him by the members of the Legislative Council, as follows:—

"Van Diemen's Land,

"February 1, 1842.

"Sir,—We whose names are attached to this address, having had constant opportunities of witnessing the zeal, ability, and honorable deportment, with which you have invariably acted in the Legislative Council, cannot suffer you to depart from this Colony without expressing the high regard which we entertain for your public character and official conduct.

"You have performed the duties of your high office with a just and consistent attachment to the rights of the crown. The untiring industry, too, which you have ever exhibited in the Council, and the desire you have at all times manifested to make every portion of the public expenditure intelligible, demand from us a distinct acknowledgment of your claims to our approbation.

"(Signed by)

THOMAS ANSTEY, M.L.C.,

"and six others.

"To John Montagu, Esq."

#### REPLY.

"Gentlemen,—I beg to acknowledge the receipt of your kind address, which has been presented to me this morning. That my public conduct should have secured such a testimonial from those who have had such frequent and good opportunities of judging of it, is, under the circumstances in



which I am so suddenly placed, most gratifying to my feelings; and I am very glad that the consideration evinced by you enables me to accept this mark of distinction at your hands.

"I have now lived amongst you, Gentlemen, in official life, with little intermission, for eighteen years. I am conscious that during that period I have devoted all my energies to support the honor and dignity of the Crown, and to the best interests of this country; and it is a proud satisfaction to me to be thus assured by the unofficial members of the Legislative Council, that although frequently differing from you politically, my motives and exertions are appreciated by you all.

"With every good wish for the health and happiness of yourselves and families, and the prosperity of Van Diemen's Land.

"I have the honor to remain, Gentlemen,

"Your most obedient servant,

"(Signed) JOHN MONTAGU.

"To Thomas Anstey, Esq., M.L.C.,

"and others."

The following letter, to the same purport, will be read now with additional interest, as the writer of it, after a life of thirty years, uprightly and honorably passed in the public service, as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court at Van Diemen's Land, has just received his well-merited retirement:—

"Hobart Town,

"February 5, 1842.

"My dear Captain Montagu,—You know my objection to joining in public addresses to Government officers placed in the circumstances in which you now are, and if it is true, as I have heard, that an address is to be presented to you, I hope you will not impute it to any diminution of the great regard I have always professed and really felt for you, that I still adhere to the rule which I laid down for myself at a time when I could not have anticipated its application to you.



“ But since you are pleased to think that the opportunities which I have had, during eighteen years, of forming a just estimate of your merits as a public officer have been such as would render my testimony satisfactory to your friends and to others in England, who may hear of your case, I cannot refuse to comply with the wish you have expressed, that I should give it in the more private form of a letter, which you are at liberty to show whenever and to whomsoever you may judge it useful to do so.

“ Of your management of the business of the Town Adjutant’s Office I can say nothing, for it never came under my observation, and I might pass over the period when you were Clerk of the Council, by saying that you executed that office with fidelity to the Government and with regularity and despatch—the only qualifications the office requires ; but it was during that time, if I mistake not, that the Government and the Colony reaped the benefit of the great services you rendered to them when you took over the charge of the Treasury . . . . and when you projected and carried into execution those reforms in the administration of the Post-Office which proved so eminently useful.

“ But it has been chiefly since you became Colonial Secretary that this community has been able to estimate your true value as a public officer ; and I am sure even your enemies will admit your thorough knowledge of every branch of the public service ; your unceasing application to business,—your quickness of apprehension,—your patient attention to the claims and representations which the settlers have had occasion to make to you, or through your office ; your punctuality and despatch,—your zealous advocacy of all works of public utility, and the plain, open, intelligible and effective manner in which you have brought forward and conducted all the measures of the Government in the Legislative Councils.

“ I know that the facility with which the great variety and large amount of the public business which has passed through your hands has been transacted, especially since your last return from England, has been the subject of very general admiration ; and while on the one hand you have always appeared to me to have maintained a due regard for



the honor and the interest of the Government, you have, on the other hand, won the very great share which you enjoy of the public esteem, without ever condescending to run after popularity.

"But what, according to my observation, was your chief value as a servant of the Government, consisted not in the ability with which you discharged one, or other, or all of the many duties of your office, but in your character, in the very high opinion generally entertained of your talents, your diligence, your sound judgment and your honor, and in the general confidence in you which resulted from that opinion, —a confidence which few Colonial public servants have been fortunate enough to acquire, at least to the same degree.

"I have often witnessed its effect in the Legislative Council, and am enabled to say how great a benefit the Government has derived from it, and I know it has had effects equally beneficial out of the Council. Of the latter I could mention two instances which are probably unknown both to the Government and to you, which have come to my knowledge very recently.

"But I must close this, I fear, too long letter; one can say much more of a man than to his face, and I could say much more of you were I writing to another; but I could not say less, even when addressing myself to you. God bless you, and those who belong to you; and in the confident hope that we may ere long meet again.

"I am, my dear Montagu,

"Your faithful and most attached friend,

"J. L. PEDDER."

Numerous letters of like character with the above reached Mr. Montagu from every quarter, as the tidings of his departure for England were received; many friends hastened from great distances, for the purpose of taking leave of him, previous to his embarkation; and every unequivocal demonstration of public opinion and private feeling and regard which could be manifested, testified, by the strongest



proofs, that Mr. Montagu left Van Diemen's Land honored and regretted by all.

On his disembarkation in England, the 24th June, 1842, he reported his arrival to Lord Stanley; and at once communicated to his lordship all the particulars of his suspension: the relation of them was manly, straightforward, confident; and concluded, after a full and circumstantial statement of all that could be offered in explanation and justification of his conduct, with these earnest words:—

“In your Lordship's hands I leave my case with the most perfect confidence. My character, my happiness, my fortune, the prospects, the welfare and the advancement in life of my children depend upon your Lordship's decision; but I rest satisfied that truth, innocence, and honorable deportment will not be overlooked by your Lordship, when reviewing the conduct of a gentleman whose public life of upwards of twenty-eight years in the military and civil services of his Sovereign has hitherto been not only untarnished, but the subject of the highest commendations from every public functionary under whom he has served.”

The result of his appeal was, that his character was vindicated from any intentional disrespect towards the Governor; that he was acquitted by Lord Stanley of the charges laid against him; and that he was relieved from every censure which could impugn the integrity or the propriety of his conduct.

Such was the immediate issue of this misunderstanding; but its remote consequences influenced the whole of Mr. Montagu's after career. For many reasons Lord Stanley thought it expedient that he should not return to his former office at Van Diemen's Land; yet, at the same time, his Lordship readily availed himself of an opportunity of showing in the plainest manner how fully he appreciated his



talents, and how confidently he could entrust to him a field of labor in which those talents could be exerted. The office of Colonial Secretary at the Cape of Good Hope was then vacant, and it was at once offered by Lord Stanley for Mr. Montagu's deliberation. The appointment he cheerfully accepted, under a sense of duty, although, as will be after seen, he had cause to anticipate that in one sense, it would not be to his advantage. One point, however, is clear, that this step was the turning point in his public history, for his new office gave full scope for energies and abilities of the highest order, and to fit himself for its full demands, was henceforth Mr. Montagu's untiring aim. How far he succeeded, the great public works and acts of lasting usefulness which he was instrumental in accomplishing at the Cape, must testify.